

“Mercy for the merciful”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

1. Discuss the Beatitudes “poor in spirit”, “those who mourn”, and “the merciful”.
 - a. How do these relate to one another?

- b. What are the common attitudes that tie these together?

2. Discuss common understandings of “mercy”.
 - a. When is mercy needed? Who needs it?

- b. How do we expect mercy to be shown in practical ways?

- c. What are some ungodly attitudes we might have toward those who we perceive as needing mercy?

3. Discuss the following definition of mercy:

Mercy is active kindness toward those in misery that is especially demonstrated by the grant of forgiveness.

- a. What is “active” kindness?

- b. How might this definition connect with Psalm 41:1?

4. Discuss Matthew 20:29-34.

- a. Why do these men cry out for “mercy”? How might this connect with our definition above?

- b. What do you think these men were hoping for?

- c. How does Jesus respond? Why does He respond?

5. Read Matthew 18:23-35 (note esp. v 33) and discuss or think through the following:

- a. How does this parable connect with our definition of mercy above?

- b. In what ways is forgiveness “kindness toward those in misery”?

- c. How might the 2nd Beatitude (5:4) connect with forgiveness as an aspect of mercy?

6. Discuss what it might look like for you to show mercy with active kindness.
 - a. Describe practical examples from your own experience where you have or could show kindness to people in misery (try to keep the examples local).
 - b. When you see people in need, how does your heart react to them?
 - i. What if you know they are reaping the consequences of their sin?
 - ii. What if it's someone who has hurt you in some way?
 - c. How are you tempted to act toward these people in ways contrary to mercy?
 - d. When is it most difficult for you to show mercy toward others?
7. Read Luke 6:27-36 (esp. 27-31 and 36) and discuss or think through the following:
 - a. How do these statements challenge your attitudes toward difficult people?
 - b. What makes it so difficult to show mercy to an enemy?
 - c. How might verse 36 connect with Matthew 5:3 and 4? What about 5:6?
 - d. Can you identify from Luke 6:27-31 practical ways you could do good to those you might consider an "enemy"? What are some simple ways Jesus mentions?
8. Re-read Matthew 18:23-35 and discuss or think through the following:
 - a. What are the specific actions the forgiven slave took toward his fellow slave who owed him money (cf. v 28-30)? What do you think was motivating him?
 - b. Why was the king so angry? Did he have a right to be angry?
 - c. On what basis did the king expect forgiveness from his slave (cf. v 33)?

- d. How does this parable relate to God's actions toward you?
- e. What is the "mercy" your King expects from you? What makes this so hard to give?

[If you are struggling to forgive someone who has wronged you, it may be time to seek help from another mature believer or from Pastor Kelly. Consider the words of verse 35 and don't delay.]

- 9. Discuss or meditate upon the promise of mercy offered in Matt. 5:7.
 - a. How might this verse connect to Psalm 121 (cf. also Heb. 4:16)?
 - b. In what ways does God show active kindness to you in your misery now? What are some of the means He uses to bring His help to you?
 - c. How might this promise connect to Ephesians 2:4-9?
 - d. Do you ever doubt God's forgiveness?
 - i. When are these doubts the strongest?
 - ii. What are you thinking in those moments?
 - iii. What Scriptures used as a part of this study might help you grow in your assurance of God's forgiveness?
 - iv. Have you shared these doubts with another believer?